Meijer Meat Buyers' Bid Marks $1M in Support of Michigan Livestock Expo

We've been attending the Michigan Livestock Expo "Sale-abration" since the event's inception in 1996, but this year was particularly special. Meijer meat buyers Christi Rozema and Ben Lesneski had the honor of placing the bid that brought our cumulative support of the event over the last 25 years to $1 million.

"Meijer has been a critical partner all along," said Jeff Haarer, Vice President of the Michigan Livestock Scholarship Fund and Director of the Michigan Livestock Expo. "We can always count on them. They're a big reason why the event has carried on and continued to be such a success."

The Michigan Livestock Expo has been inspiring future generations of farmers and ranchers since 1996 by giving youth exhibitors the opportunity to raise and show livestock for financial prizes, as well as scholarships. Over the years, the Michigan Livestock Scholarship Fund has awarded more than $600,000 in scholarships.

This year, we spent more than $62,000 on award-winning livestock before donating the livestock back to be sold again at market – all in an effort to raise additional dollars for the scholarship fund.

"It's all about the kids," Ben said. "There are so many more components to doing this than people realize … they learn about business and how to care for something beyond themselves."

Christi added that this event is not just important because of the scholarships it provides, but also the inspiration it instills in youth to learn where their food comes from and become interested in animal husbandry.

"They're the future of our food supply," she said. "The average rancher is older, so there are lots of gaps to fill in the industry."

As a former livestock exhibitor, Christi knows firsthand just how important events like these can be. In her sophomore year of college, Christi showed a lamb at the South Bend, Ind. country fair where it was purchased by her local Meijer store. She has since passed on her passion for farming and raising livestock to her children, who have also participated in 4-H programs and won scholarships through the Michigan Livestock Expo.

This year's auction raised $254,000, which yields $90,000 in scholarships and educational awards.

We're proud to support future farmers and ranchers through events like this one across the Midwest from county fairs to statewide competitions.

Additional assets available online: **Photos** (2)

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